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America's fracture lines

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PARIS

"Vietnam" has been the code word for the formidable array of troubles that has weakened the United States during the last five years. "Palestine" may be the code word symbolizing other agonies during the next five years.

Like crystals, political societies contain hidden lines of fracture which, if discerned by a revolutionary expert who presses a wedge along their axes, can produce a shattering effect. Such political diamond-splitting was effectively accomplished along class lines when Lenin destroyed old Russia's dilapidated system.

Class lines of fracture do not exist in all societies. For example, neither in underdeveloped Black Africa nor in overdeveloped America are there such horizontal, if hidden, layers. The lines of possible fracture are instead vertical: in Africa, tribe and superstition; in the United States, race and religion.

Those who would fragment U.S. society can hardly attempt this along class lines because almost every American either is, was or aspires to be a capitalist. But vertical lines are more dangerous because, regardless of common nationality and common economic goal. Americans still differ sufficiently in racial and religious antecedents so that they can be aroused against each other during times of acute tension.

Analyses of recent American elections dealt with the black vote or the Puerto Rican, Irish, Jewish, Polish or Italian vote much as they argued about the Roman Catholic vote nine years earlier. This wide diversity is, of course, the obvious result of a melting pot society whose varied ingredients make it especially vital when everything bubbles happily under normal conditions.

'Boiling point'

However, when the temperature reaches boiling point, diversity can make for much less happiness. This has been underscored during the bewildering Vietnam war, which coincides with a sharp rise in the expression of Negro discontent. Vietnam as a code word therefore came to symbolize not only a tragic new kind

of war but race tension and urban problems, all of which have been leavened by the yeast of what is called the New Left.

"Vietnam," furthermore, stands for both internal confrontation between discontented Americans and external confrontations with their most dangerous adversaries, Russia and China. When, as now seems more and more likely, "Palestine" develops as a code word, similar internal and external confrontations can be anticipated.

Bipartisan U.S. foreign policy supports Israel with economic, military and diplomatic aid. But the conflict continues to fester, enhancing the possibility of a potential showdown with the Soviet Union, which is committed to help Israel's enemies.

Now the Fedayeen, or Palestine Arab guerrillas, have become a dynamic force inside Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. China has been pro-Fedayeen all along while Russia ignored the movement. But there are hints that Moscow hopes to make up for lost time. It is a good guess that if the guerrillas ever proclaim an Arab "Palestine government - in - exile" it will be recognized by the Kremlin.

'Palestinian'

Fedayeen propaganda stresses the word "Palestine" and insists the conflict is a "Palestine war", not an "Arab-Israeli war." A new Paris magazine called *Africasia* emphasizes the Fedayeen cause and, it may be noted, the publication is heavily supported by Algerian government advertisements.

The new "Palestine" propaganda thrust aims savage barbs at the United States, Israel's primary backer, and deliberately seeks New Left support. Also, it may be no accident that *Africasia's* second target is apparently the Central Intelligence Agency, another common code word familiar to opponents of the U.S.

The additive of "Palestine" to "Vietnam" in terms of troubled American society could be profoundly disturbing. The combination of Jewish-black difficulties in some U.S. urban agglomerations with black Muslim religious symbolism is made to order for those who wish the U.S. ill. As a code word maybe "Palestine" is but a little cloud like a man's hand; so was the code word "Vietnam" only five years ago.

Obviously Hanoi's original intention was simply to gain control of South Vietnam and had nothing to do with American political life. But if, to attain this objective, Hanoi's supporters found it desirable to exacerbate U.S. race relationships and shatter the American dream, they were happy to do so.

Likewise the Arabs are primarily concerned with Israel. Yet, if they can turn Americans against each other and thus weaken Israel, they will obviously try. These things must be considered in terms of the vertical fracture lines inherent in U.S. society. It is easier to face potential stresses and attempts to strike where the U.S. is weak if it first recognizes the danger. The melting pot theory has built-in weaknesses as well as strengths. Almost every American may hope to be a capitalist but not every American is prepared to approve another's creed or color.

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